



Why Use a Wayside Exhibit?

Waysides are effective

- Wayside exhibits are on duty 24 hours a day, every day of the year, year after year.
- The low tech, user-friendly nature of wayside exhibits makes them appealing to a wide range of park visitors.
- Despite their simple character, wayside exhibits can be a compelling visual medium. Current production technologies allow the presentation of photographs and illustrations in a large and vivid, full-color format.
- Because waysides are located outdoors, in close proximity to the features they interpret, they offer very immediate and meaningful information, tailored to specific places and times. No other interpretive medium can match the power of direct association of information and place or the convenience of on-site location.
- The outdoor location of wayside exhibits encourages visitors to experience parks firsthand. Waysides foster a more direct interaction between visitors and park resources.
- Wayside exhibits are contagious. As visitors come to understand subjects interpreted by specific wayside exhibits, their awareness of similar phenomena elsewhere in a park is heightened. For example, a wayside describing the effects of glaciation at one site will encourage visitors to look for the effects of glaciers at other locations.
- Wayside exhibits can alert visitors to safety or resource management issues at the point of danger or environmental impact. More than a simple sign, a wayside can —with compelling graphics and succinct text— interpret the problem or clearly explain the reason for the policy.
- Waysides can provide information and help establish a park identity at remote, unstaffed locations. The simple knowledge that a place is part of a park can be an effective resource protection tool.

Waysides are economical

- The cost of planning, designing, and fabricating wayside exhibits is reasonable.
- Wayside exhibits do not require the substantial investment — in facilities, equipment, or personnel — needed by other media, nor are there costs associated with the daily operation of waysides.
- Wayside exhibits are easy to maintain, requiring only an occasional cleaning with soap and water and a periodic application of boat or car wax.
- Wayside exhibits are durable. Even with limited care, most waysides can last for decades. Eventually, however, because of weather or vandalism, or because of changes in information or interpretive approaches, most wayside panels will require replacement. If the essential production materials have been preserved, a rapid replacement of an embedded wayside panel is possible, often at no cost to a park.

Waysides exhibits cannot

- Replace a good interpreter. A knowledgeable and articulate ranger will always be the most engaging means of site interpretation.
- Deal with multiple topics or abstract subject matter. Topics that require complicated or lengthy interpretation are best left to other media.
- Be made invisible. No matter how attractive, a wayside will always — to some degree — intrude on a park's visual landscape.